

A Theorem of Inversion: *House Project* prefaced* in parts, repeated in parallel

To come upon *House Project* in the expanse of the mind, discovered in a field of quantum theory, one might uncover an impulse and a magnetism that lie at the heart of Hreinn Friðfinnsson's practice, an incessant stretching and contracting of gravity that ripples through his career, bending and torquing around his works' various physical iterations. The following writing, broken into parts, should be read both in sequence and in parallel, much in the same way as I suggest *House Project* itself might be read.

The strong force of this magnetic life project has kept me enthralled and engaged for a number of years. In the not too distant past, I curated an exhibition series and publication, *homecomings* ^{1, 2, 3, etc.}, which took the work as a central inspiration, as well as contributing to the ultimate manifestation of *Fourth House* (2017). As such, I have had the benefit of time to ponder and probe the work from many angles. What follows is a creative impulse, a formulaic poetic homage, as well as a recent musing, which borrows and builds on useful metaphor and lensing to set forward an approach to *House Project* alongside a contemporary scientific worldview. With no claim to scientific accuracy, this writing attempts to absorb and radiate the inspiration brought forth through such inquisitive investigations.

I.

(a formulaic haiku, variable by inversion)

1,
an experiment
in an act of inversion
demonstrating space

(*House Project*)

2,
a demonstration
expansion in a series
drawing in matter

(*Second House*)

3,
a drawing in time
to dissolve definition
illustrating space

(*Third House*)

ill.,
an illustration
virtual reality
claiming the whole world

(*Illustration*)

4,
a claim of movement
in a surface to reflect
mirroring echoes

(*Fourth House*)

etc.
a mirror of life
to repeat *ad libitum*
experimenting

(*No House? Infinity House?*
Etcetera)

II.

House Project (1974–)

III.

to illustrate a space
as if space were but a sleeve
a sock or something soft
pulled inside-out
fabric
a pocket to fill with treasures
emptied out upon return
the tokens of a journey
spilling out like sand does spill
as it's telling time
to stay away or come closer still
cascades over centuries
the meteor shower
whose ancient weights fall to land
surface bearing all effects
begging distance
impacting the gravity
of finding oneself found

a welcome reprieve

in remote landscapes
or thereabouts
the stones in ones pockets
trailing out along a path
that circles
as it turns
turned
pulled inside-out

all that was left,
is now right

* 'Preface' according to the earliest usage of the term, meaning to defend or offer explanation.

- I. a theorem, set in motion
- II. a period of observation, as it unfolds (in reverse)
- III. the analysis, or what is felt

In a matter of a few days, it came to stand in an undisclosed location free from any other signs of human imprint, an ephemeral gesture materialised in physical form. In this act, a theorem questioning the potentiality of action to affect the universe at large was put to the test, and in so doing, set in motion. Means and methods were precisely calculated. The formula derived from a written account, which served simply as a starting point for a proof that interjected an altogether separate line of cause and effect.² The claim: a house built to a set of exactitudes could contain the whole world apart from itself.³

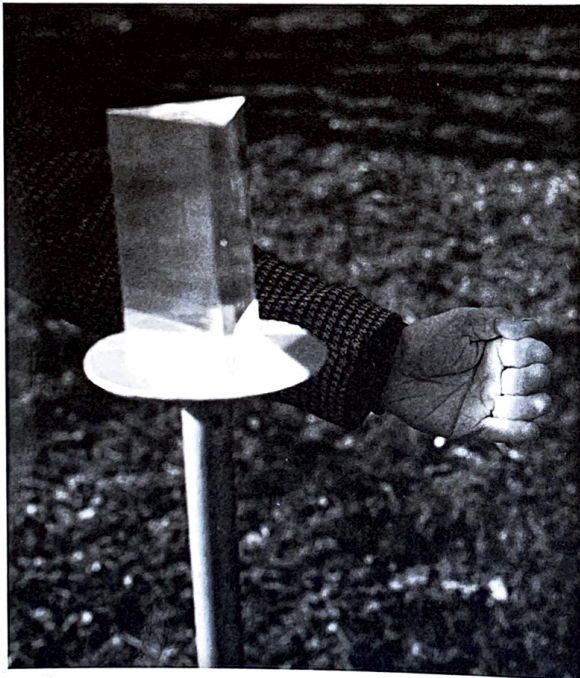
Often (so as to exclude as much external input and interference as possible), experiments are refined and focused in such a way that their simplicity grants accessibility only to the trained inference of the experimenter. When A is combined with B under the conditions of C, what are the observable traits, the strata of looking, the scales and registers under which rubrics are made manifest and conclusions derived? In this particular case, *House Project*, a protocol was elaborated to fulfil a series of criteria, isolating the action from its surroundings in contrast and juxtaposition, and, in effect, incorporating the very degrees of separation and means of observation in the theorem's nuanced articulation. To take in the complexity of the experiment,

an observer must assume multiple vantage points at once, from a localised tactile scope (however real or virtual) to one of distant inference.

The effects of an experiment in motion: momentum

When Friðfinnsson decided in 1974 to undertake the creation of *House Project*, he acted as an inquisitive instigator applying an energetic impulse that would take on its own reverberating energy. Much of the artist's work has been punctuated by a quasi-scientific method, an informed and structured exploration of the natural world, albeit culturally and historically laden, with a specific eye for the result, for the implications, for what is measured and for what is felt. A photograph comes to mind of a crystal splitting a beam of sunlight, casting a spectrum into a precisely placed palm. An application of scientific observation is rendered palatable, palpable. Likewise, the initial *House Project* (the artist's first house within the series, existing as an artwork in the form of a series of photographs and accompanying texts) may be identified as the test site of an applied differential manipulation. Friðfinnsson uses inversion as a torquing mechanism, invoking active comparison, resulting in a transfer of energetic momentum.

It may very well have started with what amounts to a kismet of minute synchronicities, with the artist perceiving his own chance encounter with a peculiar piece of cultural mythology as reason enough to venture an isolated endeavour. Much like early experiments leading to great discoveries in science, the gesture resulted from a just tangible immediacy, a desire to see what would happen.



Untitled, 2001

No preconceived vision existed a priori to predict the totality that would come, now decades later, to comprise *House Project* (1974–) as a grand narrative and encompassing body of work that has paralleled much of the artist's career. Most succinctly, the work has entailed: four free-standing large-scale constructions, as well as several series of photographs, texts, and referential models and illustrating works, which manifest as: *House Project*¹ (1974); *Second House* (2007–08); *Third House* (2011); *Illustration* (2013); and *Fourth House* (2017).

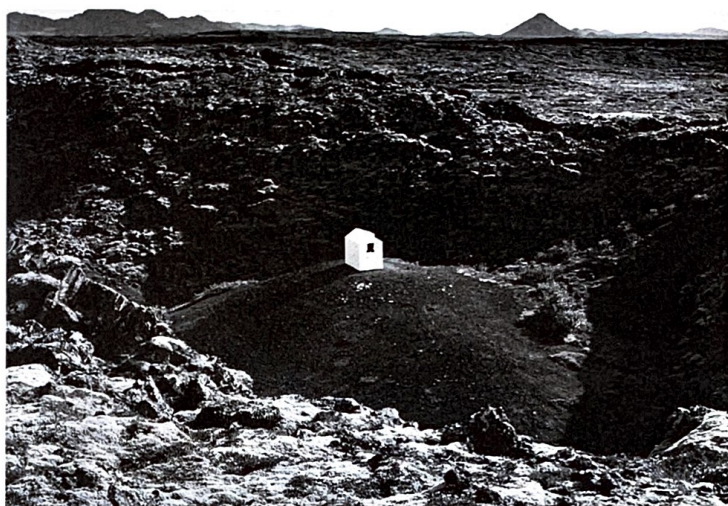
Impulse detection at a nearness

To look back and review the origins of *House Project*, as if detecting a source of radiating gravitational waves,⁴ that is to say, at a great distance of space (and time) and with finely attuned registers capable of mapping the faintest echoes, murmurs or pulsations of effect, various catalysts emerge concurrently. The text written by the artist at the work's outset points to a conceptual predecessor in the writing of fellow Icelander and historic author Þórbergur Þórðarson. According to Friðfinnsson's text 'The Origin', a curious anecdote from Þórðarson's *Íslenskur aðall* (Icelandic Aristocracy), first published in 1938, recalled the story of a man set on building a house with the façade enclosed in its inner dimensions, showcasing the wallpaper on the outermost panelling. This was the story of an eccentric man named Sólon Guðmundsson building an inside-out house.

By following through with the materialisation of what is otherwise a tale of hearsay, not only does Friðfinnsson enact the finite physical details of the lore, but he also takes on the cumulative metaphysical morphology into the piece's aggregate form, testing the elasticity of mythology. Notably, 'The Origin' highlights Sólon's naivety, importantly differentiating his motives from the conceptual leap made by Friðfinnsson, which interlinks the inversion of the architectural elements and the potential containment of the entire universe. This is a unique hypothesis that the artist ventures: 'The openness of this *House Project* in 1974 is quite a statement. It claims the world, nothing less, and it claims the outside. This is the only outside in the world, this small enclosure.'⁵ And in this, the elemental structure amalgamates the immediate construction materials with the vast physical properties of the universe at large. What is more, the figure whom Þórðarson documented was known for opening his home to nomadic, artistic individuals, someone in a way supporting the very existence of the prototypical artist, providing a waypoint in a wanderer's journey. Perhaps this gravity or pull of creative energies also features in the chemistry of Friðfinnsson's construction.

The matter of expansion and an inversion of perspective

The original site sought was to be devoid of the traces of humankind, and yet it would form the foundation of a hand-made construction. All materials should be those most typical for such a building, but their application would be contrary to standard usage. As with any scientific or philosophical proof, a series of steps and demonstrations was tested in sequence, and in so doing the theorem's validity called into question. In this case: a carpenter was employed,



First House, 1974



Second House, 2008

- 1 Originally titled *House Project*, this work has been referred to as 'First House' since 2008, especially when reference is made to the structure itself. In this essay, the original title is given when referring to both the structure and the photographic and text-based work from 1974 as well as the series of work as a whole.
- 2 Perceived not as a truth but as a plausible occurrence, historical truthfulness or the validity of the source formulation, the purported 'origin' was not required for the success of the experiment at hand. See 'The Origin' by Hreinn Friðfinnsson published in *House Project: First House, Second House, Third House* (Reykjavík: Hafnarborg and Crymogea, 2012), p. 11, and updated by the author in 2018. See p. 52 of this catalogue.
- 3 In his text 'The House', Friðfinnsson concludes: 'The existence of this house means that "outside" has shrunk to the size of a closed space formed by the walls and the roof of the house. The rest has become "inside". The house harbours the whole world except itself.' Friðfinnsson, 'The House', in *Ibid*.
- 4 Gravitational waves were first detected on 14 September 2015, in the rippling fingerprint of two black holes (1.3 billion light years away) as they collided. The elaborate monitoring device – laser antennas with perfect mirrors suspended by quartz ribbon wires in quadruple pendulum dampeners – was primed to detect movement on the order of a trillionth the size of the same light's own wavelength. See the latest on gravitational wave detection on the website *Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory*, Supported by the National Science Foundation, Operated by Caltech and MIT, <https://www.ligo.caltech.edu/>; and overview by David Shoemaker, "The debut of LIGO II," MIT, <http://www.phys.lsu.edu/mog/mog15/node14.html>.
- 5 Friðfinnsson in conversation with the author in 'Returning to *House Project*: An Interview with Hreinn Friðfinnsson', *homecomings* 1,2,3, etc., ed. Cassandra Edlefsen Lasch and Annabelle von Girssewald (Berlin: Archive Books, 2018), p. 61.



Third House, 2011

a site chosen, and a house was built. Inside-out. In the midst of one of Iceland's many monotonous lava fields, Friðfinnsson found a building site that fulfilled what he was looking for: visual discretion, a site out of sight. Set atop a hill-like geological formation in the middle of a crater-like hollow (in what is actually an implosion of lava), there was something familiar here, something inviting. *House Project* was thus situated in a position that would have been found suitable for the construction of many traditional homesteads, a location that utilises natural topography as shelter while allowing for the best vantage against threat of invasion. Without providing a map or even announcing the existence of the work, Friðfinnsson introduced his experiment as one further calibrated by chance. Only those who happened upon this singularity would experience the work first hand – few ever did – to be confronted with the incredible process of discovery and an opportunity to decipher the unknown.

Beyond sheer recognition, why is it of import that it was a house, and not any other typical structure, reversed in construction? Aside from harking back to the storyline of proclaimed origin, the structure is one that most implicitly expresses human presence. A house is conceived principally as a dwelling space, a volume in which retreat is possible, where life can be sustained away from the elements. In many ways it exemplifies the primary conditions of the scientific control, a space neutralised to make obsolete the effects of inclement forces, whether meteorological, environmental, predatory, etc. Writings on the origins of human dwellings exist and at whichever point we find the house in the contested timelines, it remains a human endeavour above all else, an endeavour in the very defining of inside versus outside. A relational perspective is embedded in the nature of such a definition.

Musing on Friðfinnsson's inversion, we observe a central transposition of inside versus outside, including its eventual conflation within later iterations. The distinction emerges as a sort of perspectival coefficient. If we are to apply a mathematical integration across this impulse, with the aim of probing the resultant volume, we are left with a sort of particle-wave theory fuzziness. While one version reveals the volume of a house with a particular set of characteristics, another (simultaneously existing) version diverges in an

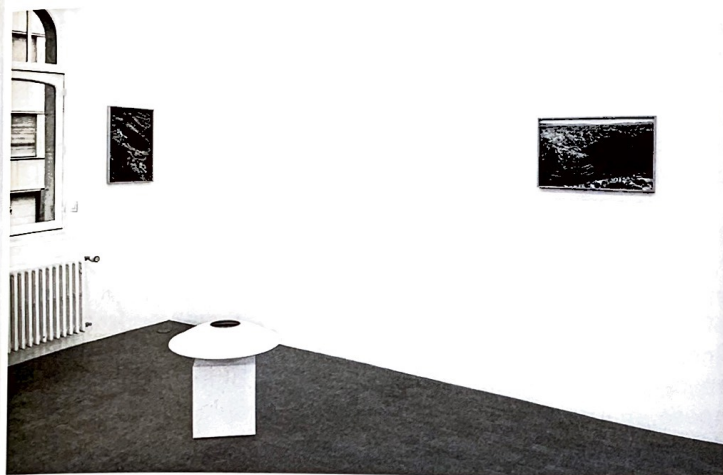
infinite series of limits expanding across the universe. One view reveals a particular localisation, a specific moment in space-time. Another reveals a torqueing and propagating cloud of all locations and possibilities. Observers are forced to hold the possibilities of both particle and wave simultaneously in their minds.

Here, a call into play of the observer effect seems relevant, in so far as this experiment's elements implicate (at least) a bi-directional spinning permutation of inside and outside where the (human) perspective siting (positioning) and citing (referencing) cannot be extracted from the observation itself.⁶ The vantage of the observer is subject to the object just as much as the object, and any outcome of said experiment, is subject to the observer. Thereby, the question of inside versus outside sets in motion a choreography of projective thoughts that necessarily implicate the thinker's very thinking in this force, an effect that any such apparatus of experimentation must take into account.⁷ And by taking it into account, the work arguably incorporates this data, this perspectival gesture, at every stage of its existence. The work is imbued with a directional facet, a shifting gravity, as it were, denying the static and implying its constantly co-defining perception.

- I. a theorem, set in motion
- II. a period of observation, as it unfolds (in reverse)
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'Have you reckon'd a thousand acres much? Have you
 reckon'd the earth much?
 Have you practis'd so long to learn to read?
 Have you felt so proud to get at the meaning of poems?'⁸
 – Walt Whitman

Friðfinnsson links the precision of a careful and protracted observer with the progressive revelation and interweavings of a poet, open to the unanticipated. An appreciation of *House Project* as a grand gravitational experiment prompts a detection of the traversal of (connotative) energies across myriad thresholds. It exercises an 'art of noticing', to borrow a term from anthropologist and cultural theorist Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing.⁹ If co-dependencies and functions of relation can be calculated in any given system, and most importantly across systems, an experimenter must broaden the scope for findings. Within meditation this means expanding perception through harnessed peripheral senses, a blurring of inside versus outside, and ultimately a disillusion of the specific point of view. Speaking to methodology, we might enliven the influence of myth in Friðfinnsson's perception of physics, which links the tangible effects of the imagination as co-conspirators in both the act of perception and the degree of the observer's effects. Whereas the first house was concretised as an artwork in a series of framed photographs accompanied by the artist's two texts, 'The Origin' and 'The House', the house itself was devised to be but a temporary structure, its embodiment metamorphosed into piece particles, vibrating along radiating



Illustration, 2013



Fourth House, 2017 (detail)

pathways, sounding from the work into space (remember that the remoteness also meant that a growing lore echoed from its very inaccessibility), and yet, the material experiment did not die out.

Reflections of relativity through retrospective reasoning

Far afield from the lava landscape (and over four decades after 1974), a path emerges in a season's greenery, a simple shadow undulating through waves of foliage, an ambling

line through tall grasses. Just as this trail becomes visible only after the passage of time and repeat journeys bend stalks and make by extension a trace upon still-growing growth, a gravitational drawing in space comes into view as a manifestation of dynamic confluences of energy over a singular path in space – a thin outline reflecting the inflection of (constant) movement around it. This is the barely discernable profile of a house, fully mirrored, shimmering in real time, reflecting the sway of leaves, clouds passing overhead, the change in light from dawn to dusk, visitors coming and going as they follow the ephemeral pathway to the base of this apparition. A nomadic reflection. To learn that this sculpture, first encountered in the secluded site of Sternbuschpark as part of Skulptur Projekte Münster 2017, is titled by the artist *Fourth House*, calls a legacy to mind, a heritage in time and space and form. The work becomes an echo of previous intonations.¹⁰ 'Fourth' bespeaks third, second, first, and begs the metrics of a finite sequencing. Paired with 'House', a family is furthermore denoted, a comparable likeness projected.¹¹

When experiments prove that on a quantum level, sequences of events equally happen in reverse and variant order: a first and a last house becomes irrelevant.¹²

- 6 The observer effect relates that any system being observed is inextricably bound with the observer and the act of observation; the very act of observing changes the system being observed. The applicability within quantum mechanics of the observer effect – proven within wave-like systems for example via Heisenberg's uncertainty principle, published in 1927 and notably often mistaken as the observer effect itself – is often compensated for by a series of applied degrees of variation within observations and calculations.
- 7 Considering the degree to which *Third House* can be said to constitute a house, Fröfinnsson writes, 'Even though the house has no exterior walls and gives no shelter from the elements, it is still highly possible that it provides shelter for something else, something completely subjective. [...] every soul should feel the difference between standing within the house or outside of it.' *'Third House', House Project* (2012), p. 59.
- 8 Walt Whitman is hallmarked as a sensual witness translating his experiential observations into poetry. In this passage, Whitman looks specifically to this process of observation, asking in what ways looking can be cultivated and likewise contaminated (via this very cultivation). Whitman continues, 'Stop this day and night with me and you shall possess the origin of all poems, | You shall possess the good of the earth and sun, (there are millions of suns left,) | You shall no longer take things at second or third hand, nor look through the eyes of the dead, nor feed on the spectres in books, | You shall not look through my eyes either, nor take things from me, | You shall listen to all sides and filter them from your self.' Written in 1855 within the second excerpt of his 'Song of Myself', *Leaves of Grass* (New York: Random House, Inc., 2001), p. 35.
- 9 Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015), p. 37. This was also a key notion discussed by Tsing within the conference 'Arts of Living on a Damaged Planet' and panel discussion 'Arts of Noticing' (together with Deborah Gordon, Anne Pringle and Donna Haraway) held at AURA, Aarhus University Research on the Anthropocene in May 2014.
- 10 Referencing the myth of Narcissus and Echo, a narcissus was planted at the base of *Fourth House*, facing its own reflection in the work's polished surface.
- 11 Verbs associated with *House Project*, especially *Second House* and *Third House*, which, according to the artist, have respectively 'emigrated' and 'returned home', personify the series and lead to the speculation that *Fourth House* is the nomadic adventuring spirit, ever adapting to its surroundings.
- 12 The quantum property of superposition outlines that quantum states can be superimposed or combined. See an overview of this concept and its implications in causal order in Emily Conover, 'A new quantum device defies the concepts of "before" and "after"', *Science News*, Vol. 194, No. 5, September 15, 2018, p. 11, <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/quantum-switch-superposition-physics>. See also the findings of Daniel Ebler, Sina Salek and Giulio Chiribella, 'Enhanced Communication with the Assistance of Indefinite Casual Order', *Physical Review Letters*. Vol. 120, March 23, 2018, pp. 120502:1–120502:5.

Thus, *House Project* may well be the result of *Second House*, or of *Third House*, or even stem from *Fourth House*, despite conflicting chronology. What is apparent is that in each iteration the house itself, as the visual remainder of the ongoing equation of energies, takes on varying forms. According to Friðfinnsson's rubric, each subsequent piece mirrors the previous (and simultaneously mirrors the following) work, and yet an entropic disintegration of surfaces is suggested – what was solid becomes hollow, or, in reverse, what was an outline is filled in with solid matter. This kaleidoscopic application of an initial inversion also mirrors the way in which the surrounding atmosphere reflects and thereby illuminates objects in space. In the world of Hreinn Friðfinnsson all surfaces are mirrored and approachable as sites of surface tension and depth, valued for their vibrant properties. Quite often it is the space between things that we see highlighted in this oeuvre renowned for its conceptual rigour and simplicity of form.

Oblique observation: the artist too as mirror

At the impetus of an invitation extended long after the realisation (and evaporation) of the first house, Friðfinnsson recognised the claim that *House Project* put forth as if on its own, granting a volition to itself as it first opened up into a series, unfolding according to a logic internal to its earliest formulation. When *Second House* emerged from a long-held inkling to reverse the construction of *House Project* in a completely different conditional context, Friðfinnsson acted as advocate of the work's natural inclination. As if the first construction willed itself to be righted, a second structure took on the naturalised form of a small one-person house, built in Iceland and emigrating via ship to France, where it still stands sealed today. Visitors to the sculpture park at Domaine de Kerguéhennec can only look through the windows at a scene staged to exhibit elements connotative of space-time: framed photographs of the first house as well as wallpaper that closely matches that which covered the façade of the first (the present work's past); a suspended meteorite, reflected from below by a mirror on the floor (a stranger and distant observer); and on this meteorite, a small wire outline of the house, which can be read as a drawing of the house in general as well as a model for the creation of *Third House* (the work's future). The crossover of simultaneity is well expressed in the real-time chronology of *Second House* and *Third House*, which Friðfinnsson attests were conceived at the same time. It was, in fact, the impulse to create *Second House* that necessitated the production of *Third House*. Subsequently, a reduced version of *Second House*'s wire model, later produced in platinum within the work *Illustration*, also served as a holographic illustration of *Fourth House*.

As though undergoing an (al)chemical reaction, the transformation of the work's medium was also sensitive to its space-time exposure. While the first two constructions were made of wood and clad with the corrugated metal now typical of Icelandic architecture,¹³ and both featured wallpaper, a door and windows with curtains, *House Project* was originally transposed on paper in the form of photographs and written texts.¹⁴ Only at the time of *Second House* was a feature of permanence instilled in the

work's foundation. Thereafter, *Third House* came to shape as a refined steel frame, anchored in an act of homecoming on the original site of the first house, which had deteriorated over the years and no longer exists materially. *Fourth House*, too, is a steel construct, yet hand-polished to create a fully mirrored surface, now constantly reflecting its surroundings.

The surface tension of the form also underwent an evaporative transfusion, with the first two houses heralding rigid borders between inside and outside (albeit conceptually inverted), neither of which allow entrance to the inner space of the construction and thereby restricting vantage from 'inside' out, to 'outside' in.¹⁵ *Third House* no longer claims space in this way, allowing an ambiguity of its form (is it a house, or just a drawing?), and its permeable borders merge the characteristics of inside and outside in relation to lines or thresholds. Positioned as it is on the original site, it further reverberates as an echo of an inversion of time-layered space. The fully reflective surface of *Fourth House* dissolves the medium ever more. With the addition of motion (not only in the mirrored image, but also in the nomadic consideration of its changeable siting), the work integrates its surrounding interference. Viewed as strictly chronological case studies in states of changing matter, one might deduce an entropic evaporation, an eventual total disintegration into nothingness. And yet, looping influxes of recollection build up matter in the mind at every step, synthesising new strands of connectivity and great lengths of resilience in the total system.

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A life thus names a restless activeness, a destructive-creative force-presence that does not coincide fully with any specific body. A life tears the fabric of the actual without ever coming fully 'out' in a person, place, or thing. [...] A life is a vitality proper not to any individual but to 'pure immanence', or that protean swarm that is not actual though it is real: 'A life contains only virtuals. It is made of virtualities [, events, singularities].'¹⁶
– Jane Bennett (quoting Gilles Deleuze)

A swarm of virtualities, repeating representations alive in their lived state, captured as snapshots in the form of a house. Read as holographic manifestations of realities – in both the very personal reading of the holograph in the form of a handwritten letter penned entirely by one author, and in the broad sense where visual disturbances resulting from precisely augmented elements of interference create a three-dimensional hologram – *House Project*'s iterations scatter our senses of places and expand the perspective of the specific while always returning us to the threshold of our own subjectivity. Aiming to experience the effects of a macrocosm within a given microcosm, one might speculate that the realms of virtual reality or augmented reality could be spaces capable of total perspective, perhaps even spaces of omnipresence. Yet digital philosopher and virtual-reality

pioneer Jaron Lanier underscores that 'Virtual reality proves that consciousness exists.'¹⁷ He argues that despite the fully immersive and convincingly empathetic experiences of such technologies, an awareness of something 'beyond' or 'outside' this boundless state persists.

Divination as a feel for the felt

What might constitute these anchor points detecting quanta of consciousness, amounting to a liminal tipping point? Is the artist's original gesture (of inversion) forever part and parcel of the work's evolving collective consciousness? Does it resonate beyond the series? As former director of Domaine de Kerguéhennec Frédéric Paul asserts regarding the impact of Friðfinnsson's *House Project*: 'all his subsequent output stems perforce from this work, because everything that the artist has produced after the house (and which has thus been placed beside it: outside) was destined to be absorbed by it.'¹⁸ Like a black hole, it is something simultaneously of indescribable lightness and seemingly infinite density, a singularity. Even if it is impossible to peer into the core of these twistings and warpings of space-time, information is maintained; Stephen Hawking even theorised an evaporative radiation, where black holes emit energy rather than only consuming energy.¹⁹ Lanier points out that information can be equated to a mere potential energy – it is only useful in so far as it grounds out as human experience.

To this, Friðfinnsson yields resonance. By letting go and enveloping experience in the processing of space as an indeterminate encounter of myriad confluences, powers, trajectories, spells, gravities, inter- and supra-actions, he allows his material work to act and reveal itself as a medium beyond the art-historical use of the term, rather as a divining device of perception. Like the warped and mutable space exposed by Einstein through his concept of anti-particles, or paired or entangled particles, referred to as 'spooky action at a distance',²⁰ which theorises non-localised interaction, a work like Friðfinnsson's *Illustration* proposes a virtual connection between particular particles with complementary and concurrent states of being. Termed a device by the artist, the work's central hologram, which projects a hovering fully mirrored outline of a house amidst an expanse of lava, might speculate on the future of *House Project*, though in an idealised state. Made of platinum, the house's surface would be the most perfect mirror, yet this is a model made on a microscopic scale, requiring an audience to envision it as a (fractal) life-size encounter. *Illustration*'s device is further flanked by two 'real' aerial photographs of *Third House* in-situ, documentation of a sculpture that the artist himself has never actually been able to visit. Both photographic perspectives register the viewer at a calculable distance, yet one is intimated physically by the work's total presentation with the framed photographs at window height and the device set on a low plinth over which visitors can peer. Rather than being a strictly retrospective and documentary coupling, *Illustration* illustrates like a scientific diagram, offering multiple real and rendered details of a formulaic vision, drawing us in through a simultaneous fundamental simplicity and a seemingly other-worldliness, in a state of inquiry rather than in conclusion.²¹

Resonance in resolution

Unlike the sterile coldness often affiliated with a conceptual approach to art, there is a warmth of familiarity in Friðfinnsson's practice. Extending a reading of space as 'psychogeography',²² where a physiological response to built space can be felt not only viscerally but also cognitively and emotionally, Friðfinnsson expands his medium to take on the pull of specific objects or materials. It is this conceptual endowment that is most elusive and yet most alluring in his practice, which can often be thought of in terms of magnetism, allowing for counter pressure and cases of applied physics to suspend and reformulate matter.

Take, for example, his work *Composition with Meteorites, Magnets and Threads* (2016), which includes the physical use of magnets tethered from walls and ceiling on strings drawn out taut towards a centrally placed meteorite, or *Untitled (Twine)* from 2011, which employs the entropy of gravity itself as the artist drops line after line of coloured threads in a film that layers time and happenstance with the tracing hand of a drawing. Or the installation *Hulduklettur* (2017), a mountainous landscape of cardboard boxes, some closed and some opened – revealing mirrored inner

13 A material robust enough to withstand extreme weather conditions and brought to the fore due to the island's scarcity of wood, this corrugated metal siding features ubiquitously in Icelandic cityscapes.

14 The work *First House* (1974) is now held in the collection of Moderna Museet in Stockholm.

15 One exception to this principle was the momentary entrance into the first house by poet Einar Guðmundsson, who at the invitation of Friðfinnsson was the only person to be alone outside.

16 Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things* (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 2010), p. 54, with quotations from Deleuze. See 'Immanence: A Life', *Pure Immanence: Essays on A Life* (New York: Zone Books, 2001), p. 31. Deleuze continues, 'What we call virtual is not something that lacks reality, but something that enters into a process of actualization by following the plane that gives it its own reality. The immanent event actualizes itself in a state of things and in a lived state which bring the event about. The plane of immanence itself is actualized in an Object and Subject to which it attributes itself. But, however hard it might be to separate them from their actualization, the plane of immanence is itself virtual, just as the events which people it are virtualities.' Ibid.

17 Statement by Lanier in an interview with Ezra Klein in the podcast series *The Ezra Klein Show*, 15 January 2018. Lanier coined the term 'virtual reality' in 1987 and recently authored *Dawn of the New Everything: Encounters with Reality and Virtual Reality* (New York: Picador, 2017).

18 Frédéric Paul, 'How a Secret Becomes a Myth', in *House Project* (2012), p. 85.

19 Hawking speculated that black holes emit trace information (rather than constituting a fully consumptive sink of energy), which today might conclusively include gravitational waves. As such, some of that data can also be measured through the lens of propagating gravitational waves after a collision, subsuming and merging singularities. <http://math.ucr.edu/home/baez/physics/Relativity/BlackHoles/hawking.html>.

20 Albert Einstein's *spukhafte Fernwirkung* (spooky action at a distance) refers to the theory of quantum entanglement where changes in one particle instantaneously influence another distant particle. The theory was famously announced in 1935, but more recent reviews of Einstein's earlier work believe he had made this link as early as 1930. See Hrvoje Nikolic, 'EPR before EPR: a 1930 Einstein-Bohr thought experiment revisited', *Eur. J. Phys.* 33 (2012) 1089–97; and a review of this proposal, 'Einstein's "Spooky Action at a Distance" Paradox Older Than Thought', *MIT Technology Review* (March 8, 2012), <https://www.technologyreview.com/s/427174/einsteins-spooky-action-at-a-distance-paradox-older-than-thought/>.

21 In the author's on-going conversation with Friðfinnsson the rich openness to potentiality that such readings offer repeatedly surfaces. Such an inquiry is seen too in Einstein's public conclusions that 'even though the realms of religion and science in themselves are clearly marked off from each other [there are] strong reciprocal relationships and dependencies. [...] For science can only ascertain what is, but not what should be'. Albert Einstein, 'Religion and Science', *New York Times Magazine* (9 November 1930), pp. 3–4.

22 Per Colin Ellard, *Places of the Heart: The Psychogeography of Everyday Life* (New York: Bellevue Literary Press, 2015).

surfaces housing ammonite fossils, an anatomical model of the inner ear, and select photographs of the artist's previous works – interspersed with glinting crystals, and at times overlaid with a projection of a looping video of waves washing upon the shoreline, crashing into the coastal sandstone, pulling solid earth into the surf. We too are drawn towards the results – perhaps we also pull – like a meteorite emitting and engulfed in its own unquenchable outward and inward bending magnetic flux.

While curating the exhibition series *homecomings*, I was fascinated by the text that Friðfinnsson wrote about *Third House*, where he speculated as to the foreseeable future of the structure; left to the elements in the lava landscape, if unmaintained, he ventured: *No House*.²³ At the time, I read this as a viable work in its own right. Conversely, the artist has said that he sees it as a scenario tied specifically to a place. Were *Third House* to become indistinguishable from its surroundings, would it transform in identity too? A particle degrading into an anti-particle? Might *No House* actually already exist even in its purely conceptual form, as a state of potential energy? This concept of *No House* also ruminates on the vision of no human perspective, if ever this could be consciously conceptualised. Outside outside. In a climate of divisions in terms of the anthropocene, such a notion of non-existence, or else the evaporation and subsuming of the built into the entropic cycles of nature, crystallises the very opposite scales of registration, namely the vivaciously constructive. What of the potential for an *Etcetera* or *Infinity House*, a *House Ad Infinitum* that persists through relativity, through co-relation, as an augmented field of resonance?²⁴ Inside inside inside inside/outside outside outside outside, etcetera.

23 Friðfinnsson writes, 'Because *House Project* was documented through photographs, the house itself could disintegrate without any regret. *Third House* was also erected in a clandestine location in the middle of the night. It is much more robust than the first house as it is built from stainless steel. But everything, even stainless steel, wastes away in time. The steel will eventually turn brown with rust and assimilate the colours of the surrounding lava. It has yet to be decided whether the house should be maintained at all, and whether the most natural process would be for the house to gradually vanish in time, leaving only the final product: *No House*.' 'Third House', *House Project* (2012), p. 59. The artist's full text was included in the 2013 exhibition *homecomings* in Berlin.

24 When this question was posed to Friðfinnsson by the author he responded, 'You can never know. Ideas come in all shapes; they can surprise you. Not exactly a nomadic house, but it is possible it could move.' See Edlefsen Lasch, 'Returning to *House Project*', *homecomings* ^{1,2,3, etc.}, p. 65.